

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives passed House Concurrent Resolution 353 yesterday by a nearly party line vote of 221-209. Every Democrat save one voted against the bill, and all but two Republicans voted for it.

Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 30), the only congressional member from Southern California who is on the House Ways and Means Committee and is a member of its Subcommittee on Social Security, voted against the resolution citing problems with the budget's raid on Social Security monies to help offset rising deficits.

During yesterday's debate on the resolution, Rep. Becerra commented, "I remember two years ago we had a President who said ... we are going to save Social Security first. It seems now we have a President and colleagues on the other side who say because we have hard economic times, and because we have to pass a budget, we have to take from Social Security first."

The Bush Administration's Office of Management and Budget assumes that the federal government will have on-budget deficits of \$830 billion over the next five years. These debts would be offset by dipping into the Social Security trust fund. "Taking \$830 billion from the Social Security trust fund and offering tax breaks and tax cuts to the wealthiest will hurt those who are most in need," Rep. Becerra said.

Rep. Becerra also expressed concern over the budget's lack of focus on education. The budget cuts 28 education programs and freezes a host of others. "How can President Bush claim to support education when his budget proposal eliminates funding for programs that target children with the greatest need?" Rep. Becerra asked. "This budget would eliminate dropout prevention programs, school construction projects, and classroom size reduction programs."

Senate Democrats have offered their own version of a FY03 budget that is in stark contrast to the Republican budget that passed yesterday. The Senate Budget Committee is expected to approve their budget before close of business today. However, the House and Senate are not expected to reach an agreement on a resolution this year, something that last occurred in fiscal year 1999.